1:Sanders Z-5,1 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

The Engagement

Once dowry arrangements have been completed, the couple becomes engaged. This is invariably a festive occasion at the home of the girl, which calls not only for the hiring of musicians but frequently the preparation of special dishes, such as fried octopus, and the serving of great quantities of brandy and special liqueurs. The significance of the engagement is stressed by the fact that it often involves the village and not just the families concerned. One day while riding muleback in the mountains of Epirus we heard the sound of music from a distance. As we approached a small hamlet, small because most people were afraid to live in that politically unsettled area, we recognized the music as that of the *daouli* (big drum) and bagpipe. As we passed through, the president of the community came out and invited us to stop and join in the festivities. Here, as elsewhere, I learned that there were ceremonial ways in which the couple plight their troth: exchange of glasses of sweet liqueur from which they each drink and, more importantly, the exchange of heavy rings. If both sets of parents are alive, it is the custom in the Peloponnesos for the bride's mother to be the first to hand the rings over to the couple, the groom's father then repeats this, and the bride's does so for the third time. The priest is not involved nor is the *koumbaros* (sponsor at the wedding to follow and godparent at the baptism) called upon at this time.

The engagement period is not viewed as a time of exploration and reaching a decision by the young people as to whether they are actually suited to each other; in Greece, once engaged, the couple is expected to marry, and there is almost no breaking off of an engagement. This step is regarded as serious as the wedding itself, for it is a public recognition that two families are to be related. But customs during the engagement period vary considerably in Greece. For example, the customary length of engagement may vary from one week or less in a few villages to less than a year in other places, although most generally the engagement period would be at least a year. This is a feverish period of activity on the part of the family to ensure the collection of all necessary dowry items. In some parts of Greece the young man may go to live in the home of his future in-laws if he is needed there. He may be working in the village where he found his bride-to-be and, rather than maintain separate bachelor's quarters or board with some other family, he may move into his future home. Or, if he has no fields of his own and goes to work on his in-laws' estate, he will probably move into the in-laws' home. In Aetolia, if the boy is from a different village, he can come from time to time to the bride's house for a visit of a few days; if he is from the same village, he also can visit the home but seldom spends a night there.

The casual way in which young people occasionally talked about their engagement stressed the social rather than personal aspects of this experi-

1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

Marriage

Even before an engagement is agreed upon, relatives check the kinship of the boy and girl to be sure that they are not too closely related to marry. In Mesolongi, for instance, a few years ago those related up to the fourth degree could not marry, but this is beginning to break down somewhat. Around Arta second cousins may marry, but in many parts of Macedonia there are restrictions up to third cousins. Generally throughout Greece, young people with the same godparent are considered "spiritual brethren" and cannot marry. It does not take long for some knowledgeable relative to review the kinship lines and decide whether the engagement would violate local customs, which are as important as the official church position on this matter.

Panos D. Bardis, in writing on the main features of the Greek family during the twentieth century, summarizes the teachings of the Greek Orthodox Church regarding the goals of marriage as follows: 1. increase of the human race; 2. promotion of mutual helpfulness among the members of the family; 3. restraint of passions; 4. Christian training of the young. He points out that some of these goals have been only partially achieved because of the patriarchal and authoritarian nature of the Greek family, but they remain those set forth by the church. Bardis also makes a useful summary of the essential elements of the engagement and wedding ceremonies:

1. Rings: the man's ring is of gold and symbolizes the sun, whereas the woman's ring is of silver and symbolizes the moon.
2. Crowns: these denote the marital bond and the glory of the sacrament. In Greece, these crowns are made of flowers, or evergreen, while the Russian Orthodox Church in earlier days preferred replicas of the Royal Crown.
3. Wine: this is offered to the couple in remembrance of the marriage in Cana, and symbolizes their mutual sharing of unhappiness in life.
4. Public confession of consent by both parties.
5. Blessing of the priest, which is considered very essential and is repeatedly stressed in the writings of the early church fathers.[9]

If one bears these five points in mind, the description of a peasant wedding takes on more meaning and makes greater sense to one not brought up in the Orthodox faith. Furthermore, it is apparent that the church ceremony itself is only one part of the unfolding drama in which the whole village takes a keen interest. Here, in free translation, is a day-by-day account of what happened in the village of Artotina in Aetolia, just prior to the outbreak of World War II.[10]

When the bride is ready with her dowry and the amount of money has been given to the groom's family, the date of the marriage is fixed, always on a Sunday unless one of the two people has been married before, in which case the

fuss and disturbance. Efficiency can usually be found when it is not a conscious end. 805 461

To introduce an awareness of time into a meal is particularly abhorrent to Greeks, though this has to be done where factories set time limits. Dinner is served when it is ready, and without regard to efficient consumption. The fish is not fileted, the nuts are not shelled, the fruit is not sliced. The eater will spend a long time removing infinitesimal bits of flesh from the head of a small fish. All this is part of the process of eating, which is more than the naked act of consumption. He will end his meal with an orange which he will peel with virtuosity, leaving the peel in one piece; to consume an orange in the form of juice is to take all the meaning out of the act. 805 [24] 252

Greeks in the city, in some circles, find the need of hurry entering their lives. They are not at home with it. For the Greek traditionally, to work against time, to hurry, is to forfeit freedom. His term for hurry means, originally, to coerce oneself; and a visitor arriving out of breath may say: "I have hurried," but the form in which the word is more often used is "Don't hurry." One does not admonish another to coerce himself, and a mother does not constantly ask her child to hurry up, unless perhaps she is following the new books on child training which say that a baby must not be allowed to set his own pace. But a Greek has other linguistic ways of expressing expeditiousness. There is the gentle hint: "Won't you make speed?" There is the reassuring "I have finished," meaning "I am coming to the end as fast as I can," and there is the urgent call for help: "Arrive!" 805 195 [249] [355]

There are many clocks and watches in Greece now, both in the city and the village. Watches are an important part of a man's trappings, and of a girl's adornment. Clocks are necessary to complete the furnishing of a house. It is not essential as a rule that they keep good time, or that they run at all. If they are in good running order, and are in use, their function is one of reference; they do not shape the household life. They give information and satisfy curiosity; they do not tell the wife that it is now time to start cooking or serve the meal. However, there are exceptions to this, particularly among the few mothers who follow the child training directions for rigidly scheduled feedings and bedtime. Villagers speak of hours and minutes, but these are merely references to the passing of time, rather than its measure. Visitors, asking how far it is to the next village, find that "five minutes" may mean half an hour or two hours, but they find that the answer "A cigarette away" does provide an accurate measure. 805 [405] [301] [353] [655] [809]

In spite of the prevalence of timepieces, the church bell and the school bell, and even a cannon blast, continue to have active functions in calling adults or children to pre-arranged gatherings or communal village work. Even in the cities, people are called "Englishmen" when they turn up on the dot at meetings or appointments. People often arrive an hour late to an appointment to find that the other [202]